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AUTHOR Dickinson, Gerald; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study identified misconceptions about resource allocation for teacher salaries that generate distrust among stakeholders, and the study examined an Arkansas legislative response to that distrust. Methodology consisted of three questionnaires. The first one was administered to the state financial director/coordinator in each state department of education in the United States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories which yielded 38 out of 53 responses. The second questionnaire was administered to 82 senior-level teacher education students in two universities in two states. The third questionnaire, about Arkansas Statute, Act 10, was administered to 100 Arkansas teachers, 317 superintendents, and 104 state legislators, which elicited 92, 301, and 104 responses, respectively. Findings indicate that: (1) finance directors believed that teachers held misconceptions about resource allocation for teacher salaries; (2) teacher preparation students' perceptions of teacher misconceptions differed from those of financial directors; and (3) teachers, administrators, and legislators disagreed about the major components of Act 10's statutory requirements. A national survey of stakeholder misconceptions and similar legislative actions is recommended. Two tables of data are included. (LMI)

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Perceived Teacher Misconceptions about Resource Allocation for Teacher Salaries and a Legislative Response

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Dr. Gerald Dickinson
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Administration
P. O. Box 1330
Arkansas State University
State University, Arkansas 72467
501-972-2317

Dr. Mitch Holifield
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Administration
P.O. Box 2781
Arkansas State University
State University, Arkansas 72467
501-972-3062

Mr. Jeff Whittingham
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Administration
and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 1330
State University, Arkansas 72467
501-972-2317

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Abstract

The study sought to identify some misconceptions about funding teacher salaries that generate distrust among stakeholders and to examine a state legislative response to that distrust. A questionnaire to identify the funding misconceptions was developed and administered to each state director/coordinator of finance in each State Department of Education throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. The questionnaire was also administered to senior-level teacher-education students in two universities in two states. In order to utilize an example of a political solution dealing with distrust among stakeholders concerning allocation of funds for teacher salaries, one hundred Arkansas teachers, all 317 school superintendents, and more than one hundred state legislators were asked to respond to a questionnaire regarding the main prescriptive aspects of Arkansas Statute, Act 10.

Perceived Teacher Misconceptions about Resource Allocation for Teacher Salaries and a Legislative Response

Purpose of the Study

Maintaining an effective teaching staff is a primary means by which administrators influence the efficacy of educational systems. An important variable in such an endeavor is teacher compensation programs which are "... as straightforward and obvious an instance of resource allocation at the local level as can be imagined" (Monk 1990).

Although teacher salaries are subject to laws of supply and demand, the teacher market does not function in the traditional sense of a laissez-fair market. State legislatures govern both teacher certification and school accreditation, both of which can significantly affect the supply of teachers (Johns, Morphet, and Alexander 1983). In such a market, value systems, expectations, beliefs, and perceptions of the stakeholders often collide; distrust results.

The purpose of this study is to identify some of the specific aspects of this distrust by gaining insight

into some of the misconceptions about funding teacher salaries and to examine an example of a political response to that distrust, genuine or not, by a state legislature.

Study Design

First, traditional issues generating dissatisfaction concerning the funding of teacher salaries were identified. The questionnaire was constructed after interviewing a group of eight individuals: four superintendents from three states, two university professors of school finance, and two state finance directors. Based on the commonality of information collected from these eight, a closed-ended questionnaire was devised.

The questionnaire was administered to each state director/coordinator of finance in each State Department of Education throughout the entire United States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. This group of respondents was chosen because of their sensitivity to teacher funding issues with public school teachers, administrators, and state legislatures. The finance directors' perceptions of what teachers believe concerning various aspects of allocating funds could be

a variable in how these directors work with teacher organizations, superintendents, and state legislatures.

The questionnaire was also administered to senior-level teacher-education students ready to do student teaching to determine what, if any, misconceptions they had prior to beginning their careers.

In order to utilize an example of a political solution dealing with the distrust among stakeholders concerning allocation of funds for teacher salaries, one hundred Arkansas teachers, all 317 school superintendents, and more than one hundred state legislators were asked to respond to a nine-item questionnaire regarding Arkansas Statute, Act 10. A brief description of the act and its mandated Educational Trust Fund and the survey findings are presented as an example of a political response to dissatisfaction generated by misconceptions about resource allocation for teacher salaries.

Delimitations

The scope of the study was restricted by the following delimitations:

1. Data obtained from directors/coordinators of finance in state departments of education throughout the United States is a report of their perceptions of teacher-held beliefs.
2. Data was obtained from teacher-preparation students in two universities from two states only.
3. Data are somewhat restricted in that closed-ended rather than open-ended responses are required of all respondents. However, the finance directors were given the opportunity to offer additional perspectives concerning teacher-held beliefs.
4. Methods of financing education and of preparing teacher candidates vary from state to state which might influence participant responses.

Findings

Study results are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 reports the responses of the state finance directors' perceptions of selected teacher-held beliefs and responses of senior-level, teacher-preparation students' beliefs concerning allocation of funds for teacher salaries. Table 2 reports the responses of

teachers, superintendents and legislators in Arkansas to the allocation mandates of Act 10.

Directors' and Students' Perceptions

Table 1 presents the results of the survey of state finance directors/coordinators and teacher education students. Student responses are based on their own perceptions while director\coordinator responses are based on their own perceptions of what they think teachers believe in regard to the survey items. Including the perceptions of both groups on the same table was done to contrast what prospective teachers believe with what finance directors perceive that teachers in the field believe about funding teacher salaries.

Thirty-eight responses accounting for 72 percent (38 of 53) of the surveys mailed to the finance directors were returned. The questionnaire was also administered to eighty-two teacher-preparation students during a portion of a class period. Responses were recorded and percentages were computed based only on the number of persons responding to the survey item. Items for which there were no responses were not included as a

part of the total. For this reason the total number of responses is not equal throughout Table 1.

Table 1

Contrast of State Finance Directors' Perceptions of Teachers' Beliefs with Perceptions of Senior-Level Teacher Preparation Students Concerning Resource Allocations

Survey Question	Students Yes	%	No	%	Fin.Dir\Coor Yes	%	No	%
End-of-year balances are excess funds and should be dedicated to salaries.	28	34%	54	66%	23	88%	3	12%
Administrators have profound discretion over significant amounts of money in the budget.	32	39%	51	61%	30	83%	6	17%
Administrators are able to conceal funds from public accountability.	23	28%	60	72%	28	77%	9	13%
Extra curricular activities diminish funds for teacher salaries.	30	38%	50	62%	16	47%	18	53%
Voters will support raising revenues solely dedicated to teacher salaries.	16	20%	66	80%	10	28%	26	72%
State foundation programs provide funds to equalize teacher salaries among school districts regardless of local effort.	15	19%	66	81%	8	24%	26	76%

Table 1 Interpretation

Item 1. A large majority of finance directors (23 of 26 or 88 percent) perceive that teachers believe that end-of-year balances should be dedicated to salaries. However, a majority of students in teacher-preparation programs by a 54 of 82 (66 percent) margin did not hold such opinions.

Item 2. By about the same percentages, 83 percent of finance directors think teachers believe that administrators have profound discretion over significant amounts of money while 39 percent of students in teacher education programs believe that administrators have profound discretion over large amount of money.

Item 3. A majority of finance directors think teachers believe that administrators are able to conceal funds from public accountability. A majority of students in teacher education programs felt that administrators were not able to conceal funds from public accountability.

Item 4. Students in teacher education programs by a margin of 50 to 30 (62 percent) did not think that extra curricular activities diminished funds for teacher

salaries. Finance directors by a slight majority of 18 of 34 (53 percent) perceived that teachers believed extra curricular activities diminished funds for teacher salaries.

Item 5. Neither a majority of teachers, as perceived by finance directors, nor teacher-preparation students thought that voters would raise revenues solely dedicated to teacher salaries.

Item 6. Neither a majority of teachers, as perceived by finance directors, nor teacher-preparation students reported a belief that foundation programs could equalize teacher salaries regardless of local efforts.

In response to survey section 2 administered to finance directors only, the following were noted by at least one respondent each as being misconceptions held by teachers :

1. The state legislature has sufficient funds to make significant increases in teacher salaries but doesn't view the need as a high priority.
2. The school district's job is to "find" sufficient funds to grant desired pay raises.
3. If teachers make a logical, rational case for higher salaries, they will get them.

4. Teachers are underpaid.

5. More money spent on education will result in increased student achievement.

6. Voters are willing to implement new taxes or spend permanent fund balances to prevent further cutbacks in teaching staffs.

Responses to Trust Fund Mandates

In order to provide a basis for accomplishing the second objective of the study, an examination of Section 3. (a) and Section 3. (c) of Arkansas Act 10, 1991 which is a political response as to resource allocation provisions for teacher salaries is provided. The revenue for funding provisions of the Educational Excellence Trust Fund is provided by a one-half cent sales tax.

Section 3, Part A of Act 10 reads as follows:

> In each fiscal year of the biennium beginning July 1, 1991, the funds to be allocated from the Educational Excellence Trust Fund for distribution to school districts through Minimum Foundation Program Aid of the Public School Fund shall be utilized by school districts to provide salary increases for

> current certified personnel positions and for no other purposes except that required social security matching on such salary increases required to be paid by school districts may be paid from such funds. This increased funding shall be divided equally among all certified personnel unless the board of directors of a district and a majority of the teachers agree to a different distribution. Provided, however, for the school years 1991-92 and 1992-93, no superintendent or assistant superintendent shall receive a salary increase from monies received by the district from the Education Excellence Trust Fund. Any salary increase received from any other funds by any superintendent or assistant superintendent shall be no larger than the average percentage increase of the certified personnel of that district.

The Act 10 further stipulates the following in Section 3, Part C:

> It is the intent of this act to supplement, not to supplant, funding for public education

> in this state. Nothing herein shall be construed to reduce that portion of general revenue or growth revenues which would otherwise accrue to the public school fund. The monies provided by the act are intended to be in addition to those anticipated to be provided to fund public education for the children of the state at the same historical proportionate levels.

Act 10 has several key prescriptive aspects of the act that attempt to minimize distrust and maximize fairness:

1. The fund must be utilized only for salary increases and social security charges for current certified personnel positions.
2. The funding must be equally divided among certified personnel unless the school board and a majority of the teachers within a district agree to a different distribution.
3. No superintendent or assistant superintendent may receive a salary increase from the fund.
4. The salary increase received from any other

funds by the superintendent or assistant superintendent may not be larger than the average percentage of increase of the other certified personnel.

5. The portion of general revenue or growth revenues which would normally go to the public school may not be supplanted by the trust fund money.

A survey was developed to determine whether the allocation provisions of the Educational Excellence Trust Fund is considered appropriate by teachers, superintendents and legislators. Table 2 depicts the survey results. Participants were asked to respond to nine questions. Response categories were designated as Yes, No, or No Opinion. A total of 301 superintendents, 92 teachers, and 104 legislators responded.

TABLE 2

Responses for Teachers, Superintendents and Legislators to Allocation Provisions of Act 10

Question 1. Do you believe Education Trust Fund revenues will improve education in Arkansas?			
Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	48 -- 52%	30 -- 32%	14 -- 15%
Superintendents	153 -- 51%	131 -- 44%	17 -- 6%
Legislators	90 -- 86%	9 -- 9%	5 -- 5%

Question 2. Do you believe the distribution provisions of the Education Trust Fund revenues was fair?

Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	30 -- 33%	32 -- 35%	30 -- 33%
Superintendents	119 -- 40%	171 -- 57%	10 -- 3%
Legislators	71 -- 68%	21 -- 20%	12 -- 12%

Questions 3. Do you believe school districts should give noncertified raises of equal percentages to certified raise provided by Trust Fund revenues?

Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	29 -- 32%	51 -- 55%	12 -- 13%
Superintendents	130 -- 43%	153 -- 51%	18 -- 6%
Legislators	29 -- 28%	62 -- 60%	13 -- 13%

Question 4. Do you believe Trust Fund revenues should be allowed to offset losses of other district revenues?

Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	12 -- 13%	72 -- 78%	8 -- 9%
Superintendents	154 -- 51%	132 -- 44%	15 -- 5%
Legislators	7 -- 7%	91 -- 88%	5 -- 5%

Question 5. Do you agree with the exclusions of superintendents and assistant superintendents from receiving salary increases from Trust Fund revenues?

Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	69 -- 75%	21 -- 23%	2 -- 9%
Superintendents	39 -- 13%	244 -- 82%	18 -- 6%
Legislators	91 -- 88%	13 -- 12%	0 -- 0%

Question 6. Do you believe other personnel (counselors, librarians, principals) should be excluded from receiving raises from Trust Fund revenues?

Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	29 -- 32%	60 -- 65%	3 -- 3%
Superintendents	6 -- 2%	291 -- 97%	4 -- 1%
Legislators	23 -- 22%	73 -- 70%	8 -- 8%

Question 7. Do you believe Trust Fund revenues should be divided equally among all teachers in the district?			
Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	57 -- 62%	43 -- 37%	1 -- 1%
Superintendents	83 -- 28%	200 -- 66%	18 -- 6%
Legislators	59 -- 57%	30 -- 29%	15 -- 14%

Question 8. Do you believe Trust Fund revenues should be used as salary increments for advanced degrees and years of teaching experience?			
Group	Yes --- %	No --- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	44 -- 48%	46 -- 50%	2 -- 2%
Superintendents	235 -- 78%	55 -- 18%	11 -- 4%
Legislators	33 -- 32%	43 -- 41%	28 -- 26%

Question 9. Do you believe that Trust Fund revenue distribution provisions have increased tension between administrators and teachers in Arkansas?			
Group	Yes ---- %	No ---- %	No Opin.-%
Teachers	41 -- 44%	36 -- 39%	15 -- 16%
Superintendents	158 -- 52%	121 -- 40%	22 -- 7%
Legislators	33 -- 32%	43 -- 41%	28 -- 26%

Table 2 Interpretation

Question 1. A majority in all groups surveyed believed that Education Trust Fund revenues would improve education in Arkansas.

Question 2. Only legislators by a majority believed that the distribution provisions were fair. Teachers were evenly divided among the response categories while a majority of superintendents believed the distribution was not fair.

Question 3. No respondent group had a majority believing that noncertified personnel should receive raises of equal percentages to raises provided certified personnel by Trust Fund revenues.

Question 4. Only a slight majority of superintendents believed Trust Fund revenues should be allowed to offset losses in other district revenues.

Question 5. Both teachers and legislators, at 75 percent and 88 percent respectively, agreed with the exclusion of superintendents and assistant superintendents from salary increases from Trust Fund revenues. More than eighty percent of the superintendents disagreed with the exclusion provisions.

Question 6. No responding group had a majority believing that other personnel (counselors, librarians, and principals) should be excluded from receiving raises from Trust Fund revenues.

Question 7. A majority of both teachers and legislators believed Trust Fund revenues should be divided equally among all teachers in the district. Superintendents disagreed by a majority of 66 percent.

Question 8. Only superintendents had a majority agreeing that Trust Fund revenues should be used as

salary increments for advanced degrees and years of teaching experience.

Question 9. Superintendents by a slight majority, 52 percent, believed that Trust Fund revenue distribution provisions have increased tensions between administrators and teachers in Arkansas. Teachers, at 44 percent, were more inclined than were legislators, at 32 percent, to hold such a perspective.

Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. Finance directors believe that teachers in the field hold some misconceptions about allocation of resources concerning teacher salaries.
2. Perceptions of senior-level students in teacher-preparation programs are not congruent with what finance directors believe to be misconceptions held by teachers in the field.
3. Teachers, administrators, and legislators disagree about major components concerning Arkansas's Act 10 statutory requirements enacted in response to allocation of trust fund monies dedicated to salaries of teachers.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. A national survey should be conducted to determine what, if any, misconceptions teachers hold concerning allocation of funds for teachers' salaries. If misconceptions are found, a longitudinal study should be conducted to determine the origins of these misconceptions.
2. Prescriptive resource allocation provisions of Arkansas's Act 10 and similar legislation in other states should be examined to determine their impact on other funding provisions for local districts.

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